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The Attitude of the United States Toward Europe

By HON. HENRY MORGENTHAU

Former Ambassador to Turkey

OUR disinterestedness is a basic condition of our international policies. It is preposterous for anyone to assert that the United States would make its disinterestedness dependent upon other nations assuming that glorious status. As we never could approve the course assumed by the other nations, we certainly would not stoop to use the possibility of such a course as an argument or threat. The United States consistently told their Allies that they wanted nothing, no new territories, no concessions, but were present as the champions of the various peoples of the world, and not of the vested or commercial interests of any country.

One of the causes of this great war that we have just gone through, is that Germany and Great Britain were competing for the commerce of the world and they found it necessary to exploit peoples in order to secure advantages. We are ready, if I understand the American people correctly, to enter into a free competition, asking no favors and no odds, depending upon the treatment that we give to our customers for the trade that we can secure.

THE ARMENIAN MANDATE

I happen to know a good deal about the question of the Armenian Mandate, because I was slightly instrumental in persuading the President to show his willingness to accept it. On the Thursday before the Saturday that the treaty was signed I had an interview with President Wilson, to argue for the last time, face to face, about my going to Poland at the head of the Polish Mission to investigate the conditions of

that country, and particularly the pogroms that had taken place. I was very reluctant to go. I would not go until I had seen the President. He said to me: "Now, Morgenthau, I've set my heart on your going. I must send a Jew because I want at least one on that Commission to be thoroughly sympathetic to the Jews, and I have hit upon you." "Well," I said, "Mr. President, that is a command and ends all arguments, but I have thirteen minutes left, let's talk about Turkey." And it was then that I suggested to him (this was Thursday) that he ought to persuade the Big Four, of which he was one, to hit upon some one American and send him into Armenia to study the situation, to be a high commissioner representing all these countries and make a report so that the world would know what the real truth was. He said to me, "If you will have a paper outlining your plan at my residence by evening, I will see if I can put it through." It was put through on Saturday after the treaty was signed at Versailles. He took the three colleagues into a room and they agreed upon it in principle. I lunched with Mr. Arthur J. Balfour on the following Monday. Sir Maurice Hankey was there and Lord D'Abernon, now British Ambassador to Germany, and I was pleading as hard as I knew how with Balfour, because I had not heard that the measure had been adopted, when Sir Maurice Hankey spoke up and said to Mr. Balfour, "Do you not know that this was passed on Saturday? It is that paper with the little red slip on top of the heap on your desk. That

shows that Lloyd George has agreed to it." He said to us, "That's the way George does it. He never tells me the details." We had a long talk, and Balfour said to me then in the presence of these gentlemen, "If the United States will take a mandate we will yield to them almost any consideration."

We had outlined to the President a system not to undertake a mandate for Armenia alone (I agree that it would be unwise for America to do so) but we had suggested a triple mandate. There was to be a superior or Governor General, with a seat in Constantinople, who was to have special charge of Constantinople and the Dardanelles and there was to be a Governor who was to have charge of all of Anatolia and a third to be in charge of Armenia. The Turks and Armenians were to have their respective Parliaments—Anatolia a Turkish Parliament, Armenia an Armenian Parliament. There was to be established in Constantinople a great center of liberty radiating its fine influence in every direction. We were going to show the world, particularly the Near East, what American liberty really meant and what real genuine freedom could accomplish.

AMERICA AND THE ARMENIAN MANDATE

When I visited England I had a long talk with Earl Curzon. He reiterated what Balfour had said, "Please use your influence to have America take a mandate. We want you there and we are willing to accede most anything." I subsequently had the temerity to suggest that they should give us an interest in Gibraltar, because we would not place an American fleet in the Mediterranean Sea and let Great Britain control the door which, if they saw fit to close, would lock in our fleet. When Earl Grey came to this country we again discussed this question. The

Earl said, "How is it that America does not recognize her duty toward the Armenians?" Earl Grey was surprised how little favorable sentiment for an Armenian mandate existed amongst the legislators. We had stirred up through this Near East Relief this tremendous sympathy for the Armenians. We had helped to educate the American people on Armenian conditions. We had reached into every little hamlet, every church and every Sunday School in America. The American people are a better people for having had themselves awakened to a sympathy to carry out the beautiful spirit that the missionaries had developed so magnificently all through the Near East and China, and the American people seemed ready to assume this responsibility. I am not going to elaborate upon how it was prevented. I merely want to tell you that we, the American people, are partly responsible for the massacres that followed in Silesia and elsewhere because we failed to accept a mandate. Colonel Haskell went there representing the four Governments. He notified us how little it would take to control the situation. Major Genl. Harbord who has just been appointed to assist General Pershing, visited that country under orders of President Wilson. Harbord's report shows that he investigated like an engineer, he balanced the things that were in favor against those that were against it, and favored that America should accept a mandate.

This evolution that has been started is going to continue. In a few years from now, you will find amongst its enthusiastic supporters all of those men who at present through lack of international education, or non-appreciation of the needs of the hour, have failed to recognize that it is the duty of the United States to assume the moral leadership of the world.